

GALÁNTAI György

21 PHOTOGRAPHS FROM THE MUKHINA PROJECT / 1980-83

21 November – 15 December

HOMAGE TO VERA MUKHINA

performance by György Galántai with Júlia Klaniczay and G. A. Cavellini, Heroes' Square, Budapest, 1980
(<http://www.artpool.hu/Galantai/perform/Muhina/e1.html>)

György Galántai's performance expresses potent criticism of communism by the deconstruction and total reinterpretation of the Vera Mukhina statue, which functioned as the symbol of the Soviet Union's cultural hegemony.

The three-hour-long action – the location of which was deliberately and daringly chosen to be the most representative square, in a military, political and cultural historical sense, of Kadar's Hungary, which was in the Soviet sphere of interest – openly propagated the internationality and universality of artistic values, and the freedom of art.

"Hacking" a public space functioning as a tourist attraction but constantly under surveillance by the authorities provided a rare example of cultural activism at the time.

Luckily for the performers, the action, seen as utterly provocative in 1980, was observed passively by the police patrolling the square. However, tourists (the majority of whom were from the Soviet Union) brought to the square on tour buses, recognised Mukhina's statue even in its re-functioned form and rewarded the surprising experience by handing out little Lenin badges.

The "live statue", implemented during this action, was used in several other actions and situations conceived by Galántai between 1980 and 1984, further interpreting the original work.
(<http://www.artpool.hu/Galantai/perform/Muhina/e2.html>)

Julia Klaniczay – Kristóf Nagy, 2015